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SUBJECT: NORTH KOREA; US LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS; US TROOP IMMUNITY;
EVO MORALES; PLAN COLOMBIA; 10/10/06

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Weekend papers cover world reaction to North Korea's first nuclear test, underscoring that every country termed it an act of provocation, and that superpowers have asked for sanctions that could include a military action against Pyongyang. According to some local dailies, US Ambassador to the UN John Bolton warned that a North Korean attack against South Korea or Japan would be considered an attack against the US. Papers also report fears of an arms race in the region and that Argentina joined the overall condemnation of North Korean nuclear tests.

2. OPINION PIECES

- "Bush asks for a fast response to North Korea's nuclear tests"

Ana Baron, Washington-based correspondent for leading "Clarín," comments (10/10) "According to an announcement made by Pyongyang's Communist government, major world powers joined the US in condemning North Korea for its 'underground nuclear tests,' which it performed on Monday.

"Regardless of the magnitude of the tests or how important they can be for the development of King Jong Il's nuclear arsenal, undoubtedly North Korea's defiant attitude has not only revealed the failure of Washington's hard line and pro-sanctions policy but also China's moderate stance in favor of a diplomatic solution.

"US President George W. Bush called the North Korean announcement 'an act of provocation that jeopardizes international peace and security,' and asked for 'an immediate response' from the UN Security Council. He joined the other members of the so-called Group of Six (the US, China, Russia, Japan and the two Koreas), which has held negotiations for three years to convince the Pyongyang administration to put an end to its nuclear program.

"China, the most important political and economic ally of the Communist regime, strongly criticized and rejected the test 'in a shameless way...' For its part, South Korea suspended its humanitarian aid... Japan said that the North Korean test is a threat 'to all of humanity' and that it will assess 'severe measures of retaliation' as a response.

"... Currently, Washington has two main fears in this regard. First and foremost, if North Korea's announced test is confirmed, this could affect Southeast Asia's stability and this could trigger an arms race in the region. Secondly, North Korea being a very poor country, the Kim Jong Il regime is very likely to eventually sell its nuclear technology to countries like Syria or even terrorist groups like Al Qaeda to obtain the money it so badly needs."

- "The UN warns North Korea"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" reports (10/07) "The UN Security Council urged North Korea to abandon its plans to perform a nuclear test and resume negotiations about its controversial nuclear program, shortly after Pyongyang's leader met with high military leaders.

"In a unanimously approved statement, the UN Security Council, which is empowered to impose economic sanctions and even to order a military intervention, urged North Korea to abstain from performing any action that could worsen tension, and it threatened to take measures if necessary."

- "North Korea - nightmares in international security"

Oscar Raul Cardoso, leading "Clarín's" international analyst, opines (10/07) "If one takes into account the most serious current studies performed by some intelligence agencies, multilateral institutions and even humanitarian organizations, the international concern over the recurring crisis in the Middle East, the Iranian nuclear program or wars in Afghanistan and Iraq should be downplayed.

"They say one should be focused on the true possible security nightmare, which is located in the Korean peninsula...

"... For many reasons, prospects in North Korea are much scarier than what Western propaganda wants us to believe about an Iranian theocracy with future access to WMD. There are many more dilemmas in a nuclear North Korea than, for instance, the fear of a possible conventional war that could end up in a nuclear confrontation between Iran and Israel, which already has this armament.

"While experts in the Middle East still speak of only one of three types of WMD (chemical and biological, in addition to nuclear weapons), all of them are present in the Korean peninsula in the framework of an always precarious and military peace, following a

war between 1953 and 1956, which divided Korea into one republic to the south and a communist state to the north.

"... Nonetheless, the idea of a North Korea launched to the abyss of a total war is not the most worrisome thing. Whatever damage it could inflict in the first hours, the response would be so conclusive that we can predict that the country could quickly descend into chaos.

"In addition to destruction, we are speaking about waves of desperate immigrants that could flood the South and (Beijing's big nightmare) China through the region of Manchuria. This is the potential damage implied in Kim Jong Il's threatening announcement."

- "Capitol Hill, the focus of a tough confrontation for votes"

Hugo Alconada Mon, Washington-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nacion," writes (10/08) "... 1994 legislative elections became a Republican revolution...

"Now, dynamics have changed and it is the Democrats' turn to dream of a revolution that will corner George W. Bush. The Iraqi 'swamp,' drops in the economy, cases of corruption, and Republican representative Mark Foley's sex scandal have contributed to fuelling Democratic hopes.

"However, Republicans are confident that they will triumph in the upcoming legislative elections or that, at least, they will not have to cede as many seats as to lose control of Capitol Hill.

"Much is at stake... Bush could become a 'lame duck.' Democrats are promoting a negative agenda focused on the war in Iraq, the fragile status of local economy and Bush's 'lack of competence,' while they avoid defining their positions on controversial immigration reform or drafting a concrete program of reforms.

"Republicans are also engaged in a negative campaign about Democrats, blaming them for 'ineptitude' to describe how they would deal with the 'global fight on terror.' White House support is added, with accusations that Democrats are 'cowards' and want to

'flee' Iraq, and thereby yield to terrorism."

- "The US asks Paraguay about troops' immunity"

Leading "Clarín" (10/07) reports "The US asked the Duarte administration to review its decision to withdraw immunity for US troops performing military exercises and providing social assistance in Paraguay."

"FM Ruben Ramirez told journalists that Ambassador James Cason has formally asked the Paraguayan government to 'review' its decision."

"... Ramirez added that 'it is no longer possible for the Paraguayan government to grant this kind of immunity (for the military) in the framework of the Vienna Convention, which is enforceable for diplomatic and administrative officials.'"

"... Nevertheless, according to the US embassy, 'diplomatic conversations about military cooperation between the two countries still continue.' And, according to diplomatic sources, Washington could make an exception with Paraguay in order to continue performing military exercises next year."

- "Evo Morales defies Bush on coca leaf"

Leading "Clarín" (10/09) reports "Bolivian President Evo Morales made a strong defense of its anti-drug policy and rejected a US official document asking La Paz to suspend its authorizations for new coca plantations and setting a March deadline to re-establish its coca leaf policy."

"... The Bolivian president rejected the criticism from Washington a couple of weeks ago about Bolivia's cooperation in the fight against drugs and called it 'interference.'"

"Bush called on the Bolivian administration to 're-focus on its anti-coca efforts' and not to limit itself to fighting cocaine traffic. The report promised an assessment of the Bolivian case in six months, which will be due in March 2007."

13. EDITORIALS

- "Tension in the Korean peninsula"

An editorial in leading "Clarín" reads (10/09) "North Korea's nuclear challenge raises concern due to the risks of an escalation that could become a concrete threat to international security and peace."

"The use of nuclear development with military purposes is one of the means of escape through which isolated countries, which are involved in conflicts or are ruled by belligerent regimes, seek to take advantage of an unstable scenario with no rules."

"... In an open challenge, the Pyongyang regime has announced the implementation of nuclear tests as a response to US 'belligerence.' Washington called the announcement a provocation and Japan warned that it would respond harshly. The danger of a violent escalation lies in North Korea's real offensive capability, with possession of WMD and the possibility of using them. But this danger is also another reason to be concerned about international security, which is often challenged."

- "Colombia struggle against drugs"

Daily-of-record "La Nación" editorializes (10/10) "Once again, the USG praised the Colombian government's 'strong commitment' in its struggle against drugs..."

"... The report underscored how important it is for the US to maintain its assistance to the country through Plan Colombia..."

"... Colombia cannot carry out its fight against drugs alone - there are different fronts of battle... Colombian President Alvaro Uribe has asked the world to assume greater responsibility in this fight and to cooperate with the different programs implemented by the Colombian government regarding alternate crops and forest

protection.

"Drug eradication is not exclusively a Colombian problem but a global one."

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